

Message Text

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FOR: AGRICULTURE: FAS, FCA, COTTON AND GRAIN AND FEED DIVISIONS

FROM: AGRICULTURAL OFFICER

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, CH

SUBJECT: EFFECT OF RAINFALL IN PRC ON COTTON AND GRAIN PLANTING.

REF: (A) FASTO 110

(B) STATE 145292

BEGIN SUMMARY AGRICULTURAL OFFICE DOES NOT AGREE WITH SO-CALLED
WIDE-SPREAD RUMORS THAT DIFFICULTIES WITH GRAIN CROP IN PRC (APPARENT
LY

ATTRIBUTABLE TO HEAVIER-THAN-NORMAL RAINFALL IN YANGTZE VALLEY
REGION) HAVE RESULTED IN SHIFTS FROM COTTON TO GRAIN. END SUMMARY

1. ALTHOUGH AGRICULTURAL OFFICE HAS NO EVIDENCE THAT SHIFTING FROM
COTTON TO GRAIN CROPS IN PRC HAS (OR HAS NOT) OCCURRED AS RESULT OF
HEAVY RAINS THIS SPRING (AS REPORTED IN RUMORS REFERRED TO IN REFTELS
)

WE BELIEVE IT HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT ANY SUCH SHIFTING HAS OCCURRED (AT
LEAST ON SIZEABLE SCALE) FOR REASONS EXPLAINED BELOW.

2. COMMENT: IT IS TRUE THAT RAINFALL SINCE MARCH HAS BEEN ABOVE
NORMAL PRIMARILY IN AREAS SOUTH OF THE YANGTZE RIVER: CHEKIANG,
SOUTHERN KIANGSU AND SOUTHERN ANHWEI, KIANGSI, HUNAN, FUKIEN AND
KWANGTUNG AND A FEW TRAVELERS HAVE REPORTED LOCALIZED FLOODING
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OBSERVED FROM TRAINS TRAVERSING THOSE PROVINCES.

3. HOWEVER, COTTON PLANTING TOOK PLACE IN LATE APRIL AND EARLY MAY AND IS NOT BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY THE MUCH HEAVIER RAINS WHICH CAME LATER. ACCORDING TO NCNA (MAY 11, 1975), COTTON SOWING PLAN HAD BEEN COMPLETED BEFORE THAT DATE. (WE ESTIMATE, TENTA

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TIVELY, THAT PLANTED AREA IN 1975 IS APPROX 5.3 MILLION HECTARES (ABOUT SAME AS 1974).

4. ALTHOUGH HEAVY RAINS OF LAST 3 WEEKS OF MAY AND IN JUNE OCCURRED IN ABOVE-NAMED PROVINCES NO DOUBT HAVE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BOTH COTTON AND GRAINS, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT STANDING COTTON CROP WOULD BE REMOVED FROM FIELDS TO PERMIT LATE SOWING OF CORN OR SORGHUM OR OTHER GRAIN. EVEN IF COTTON FIELD BADLY FLOODED, DRAINING AND DRYING OUT OF FIELD WOULD FURTHER DELAY LATE PLANTING OF ANY GRAIN. THUS, DOUBT IF MUCH IF ANY SUCH CONVERSION HAS ACTUALLY TAKEN PLACE.

5. 1975 COTTON CROP: AS MENTIONED ABOVE, EXCESSIVE RAINS CAN AFFECT COTTON CROP BY CAUSING EXCESSIVE VEGETATIVE GROWTH, DELAYED FORMATION OF BOLLS AND GREATER INCIDENCE OF DISEASE. HOWEVER, COTTON FLOWERING DOES NOT BEGIN UNTIL LATTER HALF OF JULY AND IF FIELD IS WELL DRAINED, HARMFUL EFFECTS OF HEAVY RAINS SHOULD BE MINIMIZED.

6. TO REMIND: AREA UNDER COTTON SOUTH OF YANGTZE RIVER (WHERE EXCESSIVE RAINFALL MOSTLY CONCENTRATED) IS ESTIMATED AT APPROXIMATELY 870,000 HECTARES (ONLY 16-17 PERCENT OF TOTAL PRC COTTON AREA). EVEN IF LOSSES IN THAT AREA REACH 20-PERCENT--WHICH APPEARS UNLIKELY AT THIS STAGE--RESULT WOULD BE ONLY 3-PERCENT DECREASE IN NATIONAL PRODUCTION (LESS THAN 3-PERCENT IF CROP IN MAJOR PRODUCING

AREAS IS GOOD).

7. CONCLUSION: THIS APPEARS THAT THERE SHOULD BE NEITHER DRASTIC REDUCTION IN AREA UNDER COTTON FOR RUMORED REASONS NOR SHOULD COTTON CROP ITSELF SUFFER EXCESSIVE REDUCTION IN OUTPUT ON NATIONAL SCALE AS RESULT OF HEAVY RAINS IN SOUTHERN CHINA THIS SPRING.

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